

MY PERSONAL THOUGHTS ON THE  
RE-EVACUATION FROM TANFORAN TO TOPAZ.

Sept. 30th, 1942 was the day of our re-evacuation to our so-called "new" home in Topaz, Utah. I woke up in the morning with a dreadful cold, and my wife was ailing and so the day of our departure was not pleasant at all. It hurt us to hurry, but we hurried up with our baggages so that it could be examined by an inspector from the Internal Police. By this time we were so hardened to these inspections that we just took it as a matter of course. The inspector did not inspect the baggages, as he was supposed to, but gave us enough tags for the baggages. Speaking of "tags", all of us who were to leave that day from Tanforan were tagged with a number... to say the least, we felt like walking baggages waiting to be shipped off.

We ate at the main mess-hall as we did the first few days we were at Tanforan. Altho the food was much better than those former days, still, we felt the prodding feeling that we were prisoners marching for our food as we lined up in single file. Our last meal at Tanforan was at 4:00 P.M. We were told by our car captains, who ~~are~~ <sup>were</sup> Japanese bosses of each car on the train, that we should have all kitchen utensils put away and that we could borrow the Army dishes, therefore we went to the mess-hall empty-handed. When we asked for Army dishes and hardware, the Japanese girl in attendance told us that she was not supposed to give out the Army dishes and utensils since we were SUPPOSED TO BRING OUR OWN. Well, all of us had lots of trouble with her, but finally we won and she lost very poorly... for she threw everything at us. This goes to show one that there was absolutely no unity among the different departments and that petty jealousies and arguments existed eternally among the Administration heads, and therefore, there was always this misunderstanding throughout the camp.

Right after the final meal of beef stew, we went back to our barracks and waited for 4:30 P.M. to arrive. But by that time the Japanese people, young and old, were already started on their tramp towards the place of departure. I felt sorry for the cripples and the feeble ones for they also had to carry their own baggages to that place which was about a quarter of a mile away.

At the place of departure, we had our bags examined once again and then taken away from us, probably to conserve space in the waiting room. We were herded into the waiting room which was one of the laundry rooms at the camp. Most of the people were already there. They were sitting in rows facing each other... they were very quiet, or maybe I should say, "grimly" quiet. As I sat at my designated seat, I felt like one of those cattle I used to see on trains, waiting to be shipped. All of a sudden, the loudspeaker in the room blared forth. The commander of the train was speaking. He told us that the train ride was going to be different from those we had taken at other times, but he stated that they were hoping to make the ride as pleasant as possible. He also stated that if there was anything to be desired, we should notify our own car captain who would in turn speak to the train monitor, and he would speak to the Caucasian commander of the train. After his speech, we settled down to a long wait for our car number to be called. Evidently there ~~was~~ <sup>were</sup> twelve cars to be loaded with Japanese. ~~When~~, There was only room enough for 11 cars in the laundry and so the 12th car inhabitants had to wait outside which was very cold... windy and misty. Finally when room was opened up in our room, the 40 some odd people who were to go into car no. 12 came straggling in, shivering from the intense cold.... babies, children, young men and women and old folks. To say the least, it was a pitiful sight!

At long last, Car No. 9 was called. We walked in a single file to our baggages where many people were, their purpose evidently being to tell us silently to pick up our own baggages only! I was wondering who would care to take someone else's baggages when his own was too much. We picked up our own baggages and went outside of the laundry room still in single file, and there we went a final inspection. We stood in double file by the gate into Tanforan race track waiting for our car No. 8 to be cleared. As we waited, we waved to some of our friends who were kind enough to come out to see us off. They were behind a fence, or rather we were fenced off

from them. The only person who was not going with us and who was able to be inside our side of the fence to say good bye was the head of the maternity ward, Dr. Togasaki, a motherly woman loved by all. She was bundled up in her overcoat in the little rain that was falling. Finally they gave the signal for us to go to our car and so in single file we followed each other out of the Assembly Center between rows of M.P.'s armed with pistols. It was quite a sensation to think that whether we were American citizens or not, we were equal "enemy aliens" and to be treated as dangerous enemies.

Our train was one of those old S.P. trains. Our car No. 9 was a sleeper, but fixed as a day coach. We were assigned seats before-hand but we just sat where there was room. Since we knew our car captain, he and the car monitor got us a private room since my wife was not feeling too well and could be a hospital case. We were very fortunate in getting that room, for we could shut ourselves off from the others, especially <sup>from</sup> their smoking and vulgar chatter. The seats in the cars were fixed so that two seats faced each other and could be made into beds. We had 46 people in our car and so it was crowded since there was room for 48 people, if two people occupied each seat. Well, it is rather tiresome looking at two people for two nights and three days, but it is more tiresome trying to sleep in such a position.

At 6:30 that evening, our train pulled out with a jerk and a bang. As we looked out of the windows, it was good to see ordinary houses once again instead of barracks and horse stalls. I remember some Caucasian kids waved to us innocently. Slowly the sight of Tanforan moved out of our sight, and it made some of us rather homesick even for those barracks and horse stalls that we had to live in. We were homesick in the sense that since we did not have any place called "home" since we had left Tanforan, Tanforan was our only home that we knew, and now we were on our way to a foreign state called "Utah".

We fell back into our chairs for the long grind ahead of us. We did not know which direction we were going but we didn't particularly care... we were too tired to think. But we did look upon our prospective "Home" with a light of hope and the feeling that we would at least be settled for the duration. We were told that we would not have dinner that night and so some of us ate the little lunch which our friends brought with them, but most of the passengers did not have anything with them. We hoped to visit our friends in the other cars, but we were told that we were not to have visiting hours as the other trains which had left previous to our departure. Thus we had good reasons for taking it easy for the duration of the trip.

As night fell upon us, we approached San Francisco, but from our side of the car we could not see the City at all, but we were able to see some parts of Oakland. We were supposed to have kept the shades down throughout the night, but since we were in the private compartment, we put out our lights and threw up the shades. As the train slowly approached Oakland, we could see some of those familiar buildings which many of us thought we were seeing for the last time.... Montgomery Ward Bldg., the Courthouse and the Tribune Tower. We stopped in Oakland for an hour and we heard that we were going to pick up a Diner which we did after much banging of cars. Then we passed the S.P. station in Oakland and boomed through the Berkeley station. How many of us wanted to telephone or let some of our friends know that we were so close to them, but we had to stay in our car and merely think of all of our friends who lived in Oakland and in Berkeley and wish them "Good Luck", knowing that if they knew we were passing, they would have come to see us... to see even the train ~~only-if-our~~ ~~blinds~~ with our blinds down, and wish us "Godspeed".

That night there were many of us who did not sleep. You can see that if four people occupy two seats, no one can expect four of them to sleep comfortably in their sitting posture, and if they made the two seats come together into a form of a bed, only three at the most could squeeze in and then they could not sleep very well, especially when one of the occupants <sup>was</sup> ~~is~~ a woman. I tried my best to sleep on the floor and succeeded in sleeping about three hours. I later found out that many did not sleep at all; many just walked up and down the car all night since they were

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crowded out of their sleeping positions. As I tried to get a few winks on the floor, I could not help thinking that the rhythmic clacking of wheels on rail joints were taking us farther and farther from our friends and California. Such reminiscing took on emotional and sad turns, and also made us more bitter towards those who were responsible for the break-up of our physical ties to our fine unselfish friends and to good 'ole California which bore us and raised us in the true ~~spirit of~~ ~~salubrious adjustment.~~ ~~the~~ ~~But~~ ~~in~~ ~~justice~~ ~~war~~ and selfish as well as the unselfish *spirit of cosmopolitan democracy. But war* *shall suffer.*

Our first food on the train was at breakfast-time on the 1st of October. It was very delicious: we had pork sausage, scrambled eggs, fresh bread and butter, milk, coffee and sugar. Such food we had tasted at Tanforan. For lunch we had tomato juice, pork and beans, wieners, rice, bread, butter, coffee, milk and ice cream. For dinner, we had apricot, baked potato, rib roast, bread, butter, carrots, and coffee.

The scenery was very beautiful in California, the mountains, streams, and the trees. When we hit Nevada, the scenery changed to the other extreme; we saw desert and the sage, but some of us saw beauty in the distant mountains and the skies.

We were told at dinner time that we would pass the Great Salt Lake that night and we would know it since the train could not pass over it at a fast clip. The night was very dark and altho it took a good half hour to cross it, we could hardly see the water.

Since my brother was at Salt Lake City, I naturally wanted to see him for I had not seen him for about a year. I was told that we would get into the City about 1 A.M. of the second of October. We reached Ogden about 11 P.M. and changed Diners which took about full two hours. The banging of our car with other cars was ~~never~~ *never* racking and very disgustedly noisy. *I* felt sorry for those who were sick. We reached Salt Lake City at 4 A.M. instead of 1 A.M. No one was allowed to leave the train except the M.P.'s, therefore I could not let my brother know of my arrival. There was no Japanese at the station.

At 9:30 or so that morning we reached a small village called Delta. After a couple of hours of waiting we were told to get into waiting school busses, and then we were hauled into the dusty bowl named Topaz Relocation Center, or the Central Utah Relocation Center.

A word about the personnel on the trip... the car captains were very unselfish and fine on the whole. Some of them gave up their sleeping quarters so that the others in his car may get some sleep. One nurse serving as a car captain for the invalids and the young mothers hardly slept both nights on the train. The M.P.'s did their work well and some were kind but others were very indifferent, but not unkind. The negro porters and workers were on the whole quite sympathetic and helped us somewhat when tipped. But we were definitely disappointed in the commander of the train.

Our first expressed thought at the sight of our new "home" was, "I want to go back to Tanforan!"

(These are just my reminiscences of the trip. If I were on another train, my impressions might have been different. My motive in relating the trip is not to show hate, but just some thoughts that I would like to look back to in more pleasant days. It is just a first-hand sight and thought of one person who was shipped to a lonely spot called Topaz because of so-called "military necessity".)